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AUTHOR Gayles, Anne Richardson
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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes the restructuring of preservice professional laboratory programs in order to make these preservice experiences meaningful for prospective teachers of students whose racial, social, religious, and cultural backgrounds differ from the mainstream. Professional laboratory experiences are defined as learning activities in which the prospective teacher is able to observe teachers and pupils at work, perceive teaching acts or events with understanding, and become directly involved in carrying out the process of teaching. It is stated that a multicultural professional laboratory program provides an ideal opportunity for directing prospective teachers toward the development of self-analysis and self-improvement as teachers and as students, thereby promoting discovery of their strengths as teachers and revealing how to capitalize on them in the process of learning how to function and adjust in a culturally diverse society. The competencies necessary for effectively teaching students of different cultures are listed, as are the basic assumptions underlying a multicultural approach to professional laboratory experiences, the characteristics of a multicultural professional laboratory program, factors to be taken into consideration when designing such a program, and concepts and strategies for program implementation. (RC)

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THE MULTICULTURAL APPROACH TO DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM OF PROFESSIONAL LABORATORY EXPERIENCES

By: Ann Richardson Gayles
Area Chairman
Secondary Education Foundation
Florida A and M University
Tallahassee, Florida

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"Professional laboratory experiences are all those contacts with children, youth and adults in school and community...that make a direct contribution to the understanding of basic concepts and principles as well as individuals and their guidance in the teaching-learning process."[1]

Professional laboratory experiences are essentially learning activities in which the prospective teacher is able to observe teachers and pupils at work; perceive teaching acts or events with understanding; and he is able to become directly involved in carrying out the process of teaching.

Professional laboratory experiences also refer to all deliberately planned educational experiences for prospective teachers that are designed to provide a wide range of opportunities for direct contacts with children, youth and adults in school and community activities. These direct contacts should enable the prospective teachers to:

1. become directly involved with processes of teaching;
2. relate theory to practice.

Professional laboratory experiences are playing an increasingly important role in the pre-service education of teachers. The major concerns of a program employing the experiences are to increase the prospective teacher's knowledge about the science and art of teaching and to develop his ability in the practice of teaching. Hence, the central purpose of professional laboratory experiences is a clinical study of teaching. Through this planned and continuously active program

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[1]Flowers, John G., et al. School and Community Laboratory Experiences in Teacher Education. Oneonta, New York: American Association of Teachers Colleges (1948), p. 7.

of highly individualized, meaningful, practical and professional experiences, the prospective teacher will gradually assume responsibility for teaching.

The major aim of professional laboratory experiences is, as the name implies, to involve prospective teachers in a series of curricular activities in which they will have opportunities to perform as many tasks of teaching as possible--tasks that they will be expected to perform when they are employed in a full-time teaching position. For the performance of these tasks to be of maximum value to the beginning teacher, they should be performed under the capable direction and supervision of a master teacher in an on- or off-campus laboratory setting with proper and adequate physical, cultural and human resources. These realistic professional experiences provide relevance and challenge in teacher education, as they bring about the fusion of educational theory and practice.

Professional laboratory experiences are designed to integrate educational theory and practice into a closer functional relationship, and to promote the development of professional skill through systematic and continuous practice under the direction of qualified public school and college personnel. Therefore, it is within a program of professional laboratory experiences that theoretical understandings and techniques for teaching and learning are developed.

Professional laboratory experiences represent the core of a program for the preparation of teachers. These experiences are designed to demonstrate educational theory in practice and aid the prospective teacher to develop practical skill from the theory learned. A program

of professional laboratory experiences represents a directed learning experience during which the prospective teacher becomes increasingly responsible for guiding and directing a group of learners. Pertinent laboratory experiences in professional education are absolutely necessary. The prospective teacher must have realistic and functional experience with observing and carrying out the processes of teaching.

Among American educators today, there is a growing consciousness that revolutionary action needs to be taken to make teacher education experiences meaningful for prospective American teachers. An attempt is made here to discuss one of the fundamental aspects of a teacher education program which needs reexamining and restructuring in order to make the pre-service education of teachers more realistic and meaningful. A program of professional laboratory experiences represents that fundamental aspect of a teacher education program which I shall focus upon in this presentation. I am proposing a restructuring of the pre-service professional laboratory program so as to make professional laboratory experiences meaningful for prospective teachers who will be teaching students whose racial, social, religious and cultural backgrounds differ from those of so-called mainstream students. We need teachers who are able to cope with multicultural student populations and who have the skills, knowledges and attitudes needed for interacting with multicultural classes. In other words, I am proposing the utilization of the multicultural approach to designing an effective program of professional laboratory experiences. The emphasis is upon the importance of a professional laboratory program which is inherently multicultural. Inasmuch as the public school setting is an immense living laboratory for

interaction among diverse peoples, it ought to be possible to design a pre-service teacher education program that mirrors this plurality--in a way that will sensitize present and future teachers to the needs and the opportunities created by cultural pluralism in the classroom.

The new emphasis throughout the world on developing understanding among people of diverse cultures has resulted in the need for educational institutions of higher learning to reexamine their curriculum and course offerings to meet this challenge. As we approach the Bicentennial, it is apparent that our greatest domestic failure is our inability to assimilate the non-white minorities into the mainstream of our society. Thus, the University, particularly the teacher education program, has a social, moral and academic responsibility to train teachers for diverse ethnic groups (Blacks, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, American Indians). Prospective teachers must become aware of the fact that the American society is characterized by cultural pluralism and ethnicity; and that an emerging role of the school is to fulfill the growing demand for equality of opportunity and acceptance of all cultural groups. Schools have not only been strongly urged to facilitate equality, desegregation and participation, but have been required to serve as instruments for their realization. Yet polarization of diverse cultural groups within communities has intensified and our schools, in many instances, have become centers of confrontation. This volatile state of affairs undercovers the need for a multicultural approach tc designing educational programs; and a restructuring of the core of a teacher education program --professional laboratory experiences--so as to equip prospective teachers with the proper knowledges and attitudes pertaining to:

1. the cultural heritage of non-white minorities;

2. the lifestyle of minorities and the relationship of that lifestyle to learning and adjusting into the large society;

3. human relation skills which are needed to cope with animosity that often exists among majority and minority groups;

4. compensatory education for the culturally deprived.

It is the responsibility of the school to help the prospective teacher to develop an understanding and respect for the culture of other diverse groups. A planned program of multicultural professional laboratory experiences will enable the school to fulfill such a complex and demanding responsibility.

A functional multicultural professional laboratory program provides an ideal opportunity for directing prospective teachers toward the development of self-analysis and self-improvement as teachers and as students, thereby promoting discovery of their strengths as teachers and revealing how to capitalize upon them in the process of learning how to function and adjust in a culturally diverse society. Needed interpersonal skills, which may have been neglected in early professional training, are often developed. These skills will enable the prospective teacher to improve teacher-pupil relationships, teacher-teacher relationships, teacher-administration relationships, and finally, teacher-community relationships in the multi-ethnic schools and pluralistic society of today.

Multicultural professional laboratory experiences will help prospective teachers to acquire those knowledges, teaching skills and attitudes which will help them to teach effectively in a society of many different

cultures; acquaint prospective teachers with the great diversity of lifestyles which our multicultural heritage embraces; and they will help the prospective teachers to develop those competencies needed by teachers who teach in a Multicultural Education Program. Wynn[2] sees the following identified competencies needed for effectively teaching specified culturally different youth.

1. Demonstrating effective techniques and methods to build and enhance the self-concept of learners.

2. Conceptualizing the dimensions in which the learner may be expected to grow and learn under diverse home and community environmental conditions.

3. Recognizing the importance of overcoming cultural and racial stereotypes.

4. Understanding the interdependence needed among the various cultures for the enrichment of learning how to live, grow and learr in a pluralistic society.

5. Understanding the history of minority groups in the United States and, in particular, of the civil rights movement.

6. Demonstrating knowledge about the psychology and impact of prejudice.

7. Planning viable and relevant means for combating prejudice and negative reactions as reflected in parent and student behavior.

8. Understanding that all people are human--with individual feelings, aspirations and attitudes no matter what cultural orientation they represent.

9. Recognizing the importance of being prepared to encounter prejudice and hostility as reflected in parental and community reactions.

10. Assuming responsibility for examining own motives--and what disciplines they apply to.

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[2]Hunter, William A. Multicultural Education Through Competency-Based Teacher Education. Washington, D. C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1974), pp. 103-105.

11. Supporting self-initiated moves of all people and not condemning or prejudging their motives.

12. Assisting all young people to understand and confront feelings of ethnic groups other than their own.

13. Staying with and working through difficult confrontations.

14. Showing interest in understanding the point of view of all cultural representation.

15. Demonstrating directness and openness in expressing feelings.

16. Identifying and exploring solutions to problems arising in cultural diversity.

17. Recognizing and creating positive ways to cope with racial attitudes of young people as shown in their behavior.

18. Creating a climate of mutual trust and constructive interpersonal and intergroup relationships.

19. Building intercultural cohesiveness and dispelling myths about the intellectual inferiority or superiority of ethnic groups.

20. Demonstrating research skills relating to cultural pluralism.

21. Recognizing the importance of stressing the insights of sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, and other relevant fields in facilitating learning outcomes in a pluralistic setting.

22. Demonstrating methods and techniques to offer young people options which allow for alternative styles of learning.

23. Recognizing that within the realm of potential of every human being there is a level of awareness and achievement which can make life rewarding, and that most young people want desperately to find that level.

24. Assuming the responsibility of helping to devise programs which reach out to students and engage them in a process which is both interesting and fair and will, thus, lead to a level of awareness and achievement which gives them a positive perception of themselves and their relationship to others.

25. Developing viable strategies to confront young people with moral, ethnical and spiritual conflicts of their culture and motivate them to devise a system of values which is both personal and internalized.

26. Demonstrating that the color of an individual is not nearly as important as his or her competence.

27. Developing objectives and activities to enhance the self-confidence young Black learners use in guarding against the trappings of condescension.

28. Planning to include learners in full participation in the decision-making process relative to instructional activities.

29. Selecting materials that will not derogate or ignore the identified culturally different group.

30. Building and promoting viable channels for meaningful communication among students, colleagues and parents to lessen language barriers.

31. Recognizing the value of various evaluative instruments and their uses with multicultural education.

Basic assumptions underlying a multicultural approach to designing a program of professional laboratory experiences are:

1. The ultimate aims of education are to;
   a. develop the unique potentialities of the person;
   b. transmit, perpetuate and improve the cultural heritage;
   c. assist all persons in acquiring those skills, knowledges and attitudes needed for effective participation and adjustment in the American society.
2. America is a culturally diverse society.
3. Cultural pluralism is a basic reality in the American classroom.
4. The educative process should be designed, at all levels, to promote the cultural enrichment of all children, youth and adults through programs rooted to the preservation and extension of cultural diversity as a fact of life in American society.

5. Multicultural education in the elementary and secondary schools is essential if students are to be assisted in developing skills, attitudes, values and operational concepts which will enable them to function effectively in a society of diverse cultural groups.

6. Multicultural teacher education programs are needed in order to involve prospective teachers in curricular experiences which will help them to function effectively with pupils in a culturally diverse society.

7. A program of multicultural professional laboratory experiences should be an integral part of the multicultural teacher education programs. A program of direct experiences, in which prospective teachers will have many meaningful and functional contacts with students and teachers in a culturally pluralistic laboratory setting accurately representing the diverse society of America, is basic to producing competent teachers.

8. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should focus upon curricular experiences which:

   a. reflect the culturally diverse nature of American society;

   b. promote cultural pluralism;

   c. support the qualitative expansion of existing ethnic cultures;

   d. encourage the incorporation of all subcultures into the mainstream of American culture;

   e. promote alternative and emerging lifestyles;

f. provide leadership for the development of individual commitment to a social system where individual worth and dignity are fundamental tenets.

Characteristics of multicultural professional laboratory experiences are:

1. Prospective teacher is able to demonstrate his ability to promote desirable learning or exhibit behaviors known to promote it in clinical settings with multicultural populations.
2. Prospective teacher is held accountable for attaining a given level of competency in performing the essential tasks of teaching required in a variety of multicultural settings.
3. Instruction is individualized and personalized.
4. The learning experience of the prospective teacher is guided by feedback.
5. The prospective teacher is permitted to progress at his own rate, with many alternatives and options in multicultural settings.
6. The prospective teacher is involved in a field-centered program of multicultural professional laboratory experiences.
7. The prospective teacher is involved in a broad-based decision-making process.
8. The materials and experiences provided to the prospective teacher focus upon multicultural skills, concepts and knowledges which can be learned in a specific instructional setting.
9. Protocol materials focusing upon cultural pluralism are used to help the prospective teacher recognize and understand concepts in multicultural teaching and learning.

10. Training materials focusing upon humanism in education are utilized to enable the prospective teacher to reproduce or put into action a sequence of activities or procedures implied by multicultural educational concepts.
11. Multicultural professional laboratory program is a performance-based approach to preparing teachers for the real world.
12. Particular attention is given to the unique needs of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
13. Faculty, as a whole, reflects rich and varied backgrounds appropriate to the activities offered.
14. The competence of the faculty is reflected in their instruction through the demonstration of positive attitudes toward the cultural diversity which characterizes American society.
15. Emphasis is upon programs to prepare teachers to work with children belonging to specific cultural groups.
16. Availability of resources and facilities necessary to prepare prospective teachers who will be responsive to the particular needs of multicultural students.

Action pointers for designing a multicultural professional laboratory program are:

1. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should be an integral part of a teacher education program: general, professional and special.
2. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should occur continuously throughout the entire teacher education.
3. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should be directly related to the goals and educational theory of a teacher education curriculum.

4. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should be planned in a graduated, logical and sequential manner, according to the sequence of educational content within the teacher education curriculum.

5. The nature of the multicultural professional laboratory experiences should be determined by the specific needs and interests of the representatives of the diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds, and the cooperating laboratory student personnel; the specific professional goals sought, and the equipment and resources of the college and laboratory situation.

6. The length of multicultural laboratory experiences should be determined by the specific needs of the students and the unique characteristics of the laboratory situation.

7. Multicultural laboratory experiences should be cooperatively planned by all participants: college personnel, students, and cooperating laboratory personnel.

8. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should include a wide range and variety of direct contacts with all kinds of learners in different situations.

9. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should be supervised by both the college personnel and cooperating personnel; they should be carefully supervised with appropriate guidance and assistance.

10. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should provide for intellectualization, whereby prospective teachers will be involved in laboratory situations that will help them to act consistently with the principles of learning and teaching that they have been taught; and will help them to generalize from experience.

11. Multicultural laboratory experiences should provide for the evaluation of the student's growth by all personnel in the program.

12. A multicultural professional laboratory program should be organized and administered according to democratic educational principles, which would give rise to a program with the following attributes:

    a. Experimentation

    b. Equality of opportunity

    c. Participation by all persons involved in the program

d. Faith in prospective teachers and cooperating personnel

e. Respect for personality and human worth

f. Skills of cooperation

g. Opportunities for prospective teachers to acquire the skills, attitudes and information which will aid in the development of self-control and the free individual.

h. Recognition of the special values and needs of various cultural groups

i. Opportunities for prospective students to gain understanding and appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of American society.

Concepts and strategies for implementing a multicultural professional laboratory program:

1. Cross-cultural experiences are needed for pre-service teacher education students.

2. Prospective teachers of all races and socio-economic backgrounds can learn to work with children from cultures different from their own. Training programs must give highest priority to this endeavor.

3. Humor is preferred as a vehicle for communication during the early stages of a teacher's multicultural training.

4. Multicultural laboratory experiences must help the prospective teacher understand that the teaching process is always a cross-cultural encounter.

5. Multicultural laboratory experiences must help the prospective teacher understand the many cultures within the United States of America. Teachers must intimately understand the cultures of their students.

6. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should help the prospective teacher function effectively with pupils in a culturally diverse society.

7. Professional laboratory programs should recruit groups of prospective teachers with broad cultural perspectives. Cross-cultural peer feedback is needed. Group discussions are quite helpful when participants are from different backgrounds.

8. The clinical settings for the professional laboratory program should contain a multicultural population which represents all socio-economic levels within as many diverse cultural groups as possible.

9. The Professional Laboratory Program should contain a multicultural professional staff in public schools and training institutions. A true multicultural perspective begins with multiculturalism among those who are responsible for planning, executing and evaluating programs.

10. The multicultural perspective is required in all phases of program development. Judgments regarding site selection, master selection, student-teacher performance with pupils, professional library resources, require a variety of cultural viewpoints.

11. The professional laboratory program should have professional personnel who have demonstrated their own ability in fostering growth in pupils from different cultures from their own. Hope for a new teacher comes from those who have had real and successful cross-cultural experiences in facilitation of learning.

12. Professional laboratory programs should draw upon the successful cross-cultural teaching experiences of some teachers of all races and socio-economic backgrounds.

13. The professional laboratory program must provide for a wide variety of cross-cultural experiences in diverse communities which are made up of various ethnic groups.

14. The professional laboratory program should provide each prospective teacher with multicultural contact over time. Guided cross-cultural experiences should extend throughout the four years of college. Some courses in general education and the area of specialization may be used to serve as vehicles for cross-cultural experiences.

15. The prospective teacher must have successful experiences with multicultural children. They must see that they can teach children from other cultures successfully. All training programs for teachers should provide a variety of experiences wherein the student teacher may demonstrate his ability to teach successfully in a multicultural context.

16. Teachers-in-training must be able to observe in classrooms where they can see minority children being taught successfully. Student teachers must be placed in schools where teachers are equal to the task of teaching minority children.

17. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should help the prospective teacher understand that the habits, values, mores, folkways, customs, attitudes, philosophy, aspirations, likes, dislikes, ideals, self-concepts and motivations of a teacher are critical inputs in a teaching-learning process. These and other aspects of a teacher's total personality bear heavily upon the nature of the classroom interaction and produce positive or negative effects upon pupil growth.

18. Multicultural professional laboratory programs should help the prospective teacher to examine his own behavior in a multicultural setting rather than merely dealing with multicultural ideas in the abstract. Professional laboratory experiences must provide curricular experiences in which the prospective teacher's own behavior in cross-cultural settings is the subject of examination and experimentation. If teachers are to work successfully with students from cultures different from their own, training programs must provide for more than intellectualization about cross-cultural issues.

19. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should help the prospective teacher to understand that the public school classroom is a potent matrix, and that his involvement in its activities are crucial to the behavior of students.

20. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should help the prospective teacher to understand and recognize when students respond as victims of oppressive conditions, as opposed to responses to perceived pathology.

21. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should help the prospective teacher understand that all minds are equally complex. Experience with students from different cultures is essential for developing a real respect for, and understanding of the real potential of all students.

22. Instructional materials, equipment, facilities and teaching tools such as textbooks, courses of study, tests, films and curriculum guides should be modified to focus upon and reflect the characteristics, needs, problems and developmental tasks of multicultural children.

23. It is true that instructional resources and teaching tools are culture bound and tend to focus upon the mainstream of American culture.

24. Cultural differences are ignored, thereby causing the poor, racial and ethnic minorities to feel isolated and mistreated.

25. The prospective teacher should be involved in clinical experiences which will help him develop a predisposition toward doubt and caution in the utilization of professional tools; and aid him in acquiring the motivations, drive, skills and knowledges needed for modifying or creating instructional equipment resources, and professional tools which can be adapted to quality multicultural teaching and learning.

26. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should use the community as a laboratory.

27. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should provide opportunities for the prospective teacher to apply rational thinking to real-life problems of living in a culturally diverse society.

28. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should equip the prospective teachers with those skills that are conducive to building and enhancing the self-concept of multicultural children.

29. Human relations training should be incorporated into multicultural professional laboratory experiences.

30. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should provide for involvement guidance and intellectualization.

31. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should utilize instructional resources that will adequately reflect multicultural education.

32. A rich field for multicultural professional laboratory experiences is provided by regular campus activities.

33. Multicultural professional laboratory programs should include continual and varied field experiences which will focus upon increased multicultural awareness; and increased intercultural experiences.

34. Multicultural professional laboratory experiences should be challenging and satisfying.

Effective teaching is the goal of teacher education. A program of multicultural professional laboratory experiences is the major avenue through which prospective teachers may acquire these knowledges, skills and attitudes which increase teaching effectiveness in today's pluralistic society. In this program they interact with and observe multi-ethnic groups of teachers and students function in the educative process of a culturally diverse society; observe and put educational theory into practice; develop instructional skill and a functional understanding of principles of education upon which practice should be based; and they acquire the fundamental skills needed for effective interaction, communication and personal and social adjustment in a humanistic society of many unique cultural groups.

The implementation of a functional multicultural professional laboratory program is the most challenging and demanding obligation in teacher education. The imperative in teacher education is to help the prospective teacher to acquire the skills, competencies, and understandings they need to function as effective teachers of multicultural children.